

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 01297 01 OF 02 231827Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AGRE-00
SP-02 STR-06 FRB-03 SS-15 NSC-05 L-03 H-01
DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /090 W
-----109705 232012Z /46

R 231815Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5100
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 01297

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GW
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH LEADING GERMAN TRADE
UNION OFFICIALS

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PAGE 02 BONN 01297 01 OF 02 231827Z

SUMMARY: I MET WITH DGB PRESIDENT VETTER AND LEADING
MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT FOR DINNER
ON JANUARY 20. I DELIVERED INFORMAL REMARKS
DRAWING IN PART ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATE OF THE UNION
MESSAGE. DURING DINNER, VETTER ASSURED ME THAT THE
RECENTLY PUBLICIZED UNION DEMAND FOR A 7.5 PERCENT WAGE
INCREASE IS ONLY A NEGOTIATING POSITION AND THAT HE

EXPECTS A SETTLEMENT TO BE REACHED WITHOUT MAJOR PROBLEMS. HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT THE "CONCERTED ACTION" TALKS WILL BE RESUMED, BUT PROBABLY NOT IN THEIR PRESENT FORM. END SUMMARY

1. ON FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 20, I MET FOR DINNER WITH HEINZ OSKAR VETTER, PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (DGB) AND NINE OF HIS TOP COLLEAGUES IN THE GERMAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AT THE HOME OF CONSUL GENERAL DUX IN DUESSELDORF. IN ADDITION TO VETTER, THE GERMAN GUESTS INCLUDED DGB VICE PRESIDENT GERD MUHR, PRESIDENTS OF THE TEXTILE, WOODWORKERS, AND CLERICAL WORKERS UNIONS, AND FIVE MEMBERS OF THE DGB EXECUTIVE BOARD. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DCM MEEHAN, POLITICAL COUNSELLOR SMYSER, AND LABOR ATTACHE SCHRADER.

2. DURING THE PRE-DINNER PERIOD I DELIVERED SOME INFORMAL REMARKS IN WHICH I NOTED THE CLOSE RELATIONS THAT HAVE DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE TRADE UNIONS OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE UNION EXCHANGES, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUNG OFFICIALS, TO SUSTAIN THE LINKS, AND REMINDED THEM THAT ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT ALWAYS IN AGREEMENT ON ALL ISSUES, OUR TWO COUNTRIES SHARE A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO NATO AND THE DEFENSE OF WESTERN EUROPE. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BONN 01297 01 OF 02 231827Z

IN MY REMARKS I DREW EXTENSIVELY ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE, PARTICULARLY THOSE PASSAGES DEALING WITH ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT MATTERS.

3. DGB VICE PRESIDENT GERD MUHR RESPONDED IN THE ABSENCE OF VETTER WHO WAS TRAVELLING FROM FRANKFURT FOR THE DINNER AND WAS LATE ARRIVING. MUHR'S REMARKS WERE WARM AND CORDIAL. HE EXPRESSED DGB INTEREST IN

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PAGE 01 BONN 01297 02 OF 02 231857Z

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R 231815Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5101

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

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STRENGTHENING THE TIES WITH THE AFL-CIO AND AMERICAN UNIONS. HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED BY HIS VISIT TO THE AFL-CIO CONVENTION AT LOS ANGELES IN DECEMBER AND HOPED THAT AMERICAN LABOR WOULD SOON REJOIN ITS FRIENDS IN THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR MOVEMENT. HE OBSERVED THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BONN 01297 02 OF 02 231857Z

A NUMBER OF AMERICAN TRADE UNION OFFICIALS THAT HE SPOKE WITH IN LOS ANGELES EXPRESSED A KEEN INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE MORE ACTIVELY IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION AFFAIRS.

4. FOLLOWING MUHR'S RESPONSE, A SPIRITED HOUR LONG DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE ON A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS IN WHICH ALL BUT ONE OR TWO OF THE GERMAN GUESTS TOOK PART. VETTER ARRIVED ABOUT HALF WAY THROUGH THE DISCUSSION AND TOOK AN ACTIVE PART. WE SHARED COMMON CONCERNS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT, ENERGY AND EURO-COMMUNISM.

THE GERMAN GUESTS WERE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROPOSALS FOR COMBATTING UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AND WERE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRESIDENT'S REJECTION OF PROTECTIONISM WITH THE COROLLARY THAT FREE TRADE MUST BE FAIR.

5. DURING DINNER, VETTER TOLD ME THAT A WAGE HIKE OF 7.5 PERCENT WHICH THE UNIONS HAVE DEMANDED IN THE OPENING STAGES OF THE 1978 WAGE ROUND IS ONLY A NEGOTIATING POSITION. HE IS CONFIDENT THAT SETTLEMENTS WILL BE REACHED WITHOUT MAJOR PROBLEMS AND EXPECTS INCREASES TO BE CLOSER TO 5.5 PERCENT.

6. HE ALSO ASSURED ME THAT "CONCERTED ACTION" TALKS WILL BE RESUMED, BUT POSSIBLY IN A DIFFERENT FORM. HE SAID THAT THE CHANCELLOR IS INTERESTED IN GETTING THE TALKS STARTED AGAIN AND THAT HE, VETTER, IS RESPONSIVE TO THE IDEA.
STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

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